

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 070467
ORIGIN SS-25

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S/S: MR. SEBASTIAN

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN PRIORITY
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 070467

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, LE, IR, US

SUBJECT: DANY CHAMOUN ON IRANIAN AID FOR LEBANESE SHIITES

REF: STATE 67781 (NOTAL)

1. DANY CHAMOUN OF LEBANESE NATIONAL LIBERAL PARTY MET MARCH 28 WITH ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON. IN COURSE OF CONVERSATION DEALING WITH MARONITE CHRISTIAN PERCEPTIONS OF CURRENT LEBANESE SITUATION, CHAMOUN RAISED SUBJECT OF LEBANON'S POOR SHIITE MUSLIM COMMUNITY, ELEMENTS OF WHICH HE SAID ARE COOPERATING WITH THE CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP. CHAMOUN CLAIMED THAT SHAH HAD SET ASIDE FUNDS FOR PROJECTS
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SUCH AS HOSPITALS AND CLINICS IN PREDOMINANTLY SHIITE AREAS OF SOUTH LEBANON AND THE UPPER BEKAA VALLEY, BUT THAT THESE FUNDS WERE STILL BEING HELD BY THE IRANIANS. CHAMOUN STATED HE WOULD LIKE TO SEE SHIITES REMAIN IN THESE AREAS RATHER THAN MOVING TO BEIRUT WHERE MEDICAL SERVICES, SCHOOLS AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES ARE BETTER. IMPLICATION OF HIS PRESENTATION WAS THAT IRANIAN HELP FOR UNDER-DEVELOPED

SHIITE REGIONS WAS IN ACCORD WITH SARKIS'S POLICY AND THAT
USG MIGHT TAKE INITIATIVE WITH SHAH TO FREE THESE FUNDS.

2. IN HIS COMMENTS ON THIS QUESTION, AS THROUGHOUT CON-
VERSATION, ATHERTON WAS AT PAINS TO MAKE CLEAR TO CHAMOUN

STRONG SUPPORT OF USG FOR CONSTITUTIONAL REGIME OF SARKIS
AND TO URGE COOPERATION WITH THE SARKIS GOVERNMENT BY ALL
LEBANESE FACTIONS, INCLUDING THAT REPRESENTED BY CHAMOUN.
ATHERTON INFORMED CHAMOUN THAT, IF SARKIS GOVERNMENT WERE
TO SEEK ASSISTANCE FROM IRANIANS FOR SHIITE AREAS OF
LEBANON, USG WOULD, IF ASKED, CONSIDER HAVING OUR
EMBASSY IN TEHRAN SUPPORT LEBANESE REQUEST WITH IRANIAN
AUTHORITIES. WE WOULD NOT, HE TOLD CHAMOUN, TAKE THE
LEAD OURSELVES OR ACT IN SUPPORT OF REQUEST FROM NON-
GOVERNMENTAL FACTION IN LEBANON.

3. ADDRESSEES SHOULD TAKE NO RPT NO ACTION ON BASIS THIS
CONVERSATION WHICH REPORTED MERELY TO ALERT THEM TO ISSUE.
CHAMOUN SAID HE HAD DISCUSSED MATTER WITH MEMBERS OF
LEBANESE CABINET AND BELIEVED LEBANESE GOVERNMENT MAY
DECIDE TO APPROACH IRANIANS, BUT NOT NECESSARILY THROUGH
LEBANESE AMBASSADOR IN TEHRAN. WE WOULD APPRECIATE
RECEIVING ANY INDICATIONS FROM BEIRUT OR TEHRAN THAT
MATTER IS DISCUSSED BETWEEN TWO GOVERNMENTS BUT, FOR THE
MOMENT, BALL IS SQUARELY IN LEBANESE COURT.
CHRISTOPHER

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